

Book Five

OF THE COLLECTIVE SORROWS

SLATE THREE

(CONTINUED FROM BOOK FIVE)

BY SHAUNA SOLAMAN

Level Fifty-Six
Chapter Twenty-Five

Her lips curved into a smile as she tossed by her long straight hair that was predominantly white with some parts black. She had bright hazel eyes that seemed to have a bit of red along with red lipstick on. Today she wore a white collared shirt bearing a black tie, both beneath a black cincher. She wore a simple black skirt as well and when she looked up she pushed up her glasses. She looked at the four before her and tugged on the red jade pendant that had a golden sparrow around it. They were seated two couches across from one another in the vast room – and on the far end was a ceiling to floor window that overlooked the area, though at the thirtieth floor, they could see nothing but clouds. “I think I know you four,” she started. Extending her arms slightly, she shook the hand of the four new members. “For your knowledge, externally we are known as the Black and Red Cross whereas internally we are known as the Blood and Bile.”

“I trust you know what we do then?” she asked simply. Each replied yes and excitedly she clasped her hands together. As if by cue, two other people walked in. One had black and white hair, though more black than white and light blue eyes, with a white collared shirt, black tie, and black pants. The other had black hair as well, though seemingly lighter in colour compared to the other one, with hazel eyes with hints of orange. This one had a mask over his face however he was dressed in the same fashion as the other. “I’d like you to meet my brother, Saeran, and please excuse his appearance for he’s been taken ill. He will not be joining us.” Saeran nodded and they could hear him clearly say to her, “My apologies Sahirah.” “I’d also like you to meet my fiancé, Calix.”

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Psychology of Depersonalization
Chapter Twenty-Six

One: Do you see me? Don't you know that I will always be there for you? Even if you forget me. I will always be here for you. Hoping, waiting, I will take it all in for you. Even when all is said and done, I will watch over you just as I always have. Just like everyone before me and after me.

Two: What's your name? Who are you?

One: I am you. I've always been you.

Two: Is that true?

One: No, but I'll be here for as long as you need to lie to yourself. One day though, you're going to have to depend on yourself to get you through this. That will be the greatest challenge you'll ever face, but I'll be here.

Two: Am I figment of your imagination or are you a figment of my imagination? Am I alive?

One: Who would you invest your hope into?

Two: Myself. That's all I ever had to begin with.

Asura slowly opened his eyes and looked at the items he held in his hands. Though they were empty, he held everything and yet nothing at all. Through no fault of his own, he began to cry, catching his own tears. He wondered for how long he could keep this up before he was forced to create a companion. He could no longer recall just how long it had been for there was nothing unique to measure or differentiate time. As he cried, he knew what he wanted and so within his hands a small pool was collected. Watching over the small pool intently, he thought about the flowers he once enjoyed so much and brought them to life. Reasonably he added fishes and insects to keep the small ecosystem going. As his attention was poured into this small pool, he began to feel more at ease.

This act that was performed with such precision took his attention away from the uneasy feeling rising within him. The one that bright yellow with blue tips, otherwise known as his heart. He smiled happily at his little pond but it took him a while to realize that he had no recreated the fishes he had seen. It was one of those monsters that he replicated. "What if you were sentient?" he told the thing. "What if you gave everything a chance?" said a voice. Amongst his trees emerged a person with green eyes and jet black hair – Thexory. "I didn't want you to come back," Asura mumbled to him. "Some times the things you didn't want come with the things you did. Or you made a mistake." "An error on my behalf," Asura replied, "that is easily fixed." "Be reasonable," started Thexory. "What are you trying to convince me to do?" Asura paused and thought of the many possibilities. "Do you want your brother back? How about your friends? Those that you left so long ago. How about your parents? Or you wanted your childhood pets? The Forsaken? One of the loves of your life? If you could have anything back, if I could grant one request, what would you want?"

Thexory smiled and returned the question by replying, "What do you really want? Now that you have within you everything, what do you want?" "I don't have everything." "Everything isn't enough?" "I..." Thexory started for him, "You don't have anyone to share it with? Or could it be that there's no way of validating anything at this moment because there's no one aside from you to tell you whether or not this was all worth it? There's no one except you and every voice that ever washed over this earth to judge you?" "I only need to depend on myself," Asura replied. "All I need is the knowledge --" Asura stopped when he saw a smile on Thexory's face.

Asura sighed as he watched Thexory vanish then went back to tending to his small pool. When he looked back however, all his flowers died and wondered if there were some kind of lesson there. In the

middle of his pool, there was someone floating on their back with a simple dress though thoroughly layered, so many he could not count with all sorts of purple flowers in her hair. "Shockley," he started as her eyes fluttered open. As she got up and walked out of the pool, a whale jumped out and went back in. She was completely dry leading Asura to believe that this was just part of his imagination.

"What do you want?" she asked. "I could ask the same of you," he responded. "I don't have to answer, I'm a part of you and you know every answer I could possibly provide." "Except the one you'd choose. "Why is that?" There's something different between all of us and what we'd each choose. If I could have one thing in this entire world or at least have at the possibility, do you know what I'd choose?" She looked at him as he thought about the various possibilities. "What makes me different is that somewhere along the line, though we both know all the different choices of avail, we're going to pick something different. I could choose for you to bring back Thexory. Create a new world with peace or how about give life back to those that have lost it. But you know what I want the most in this world?" Asura listened to her intently, "I want you to watch over him as best you can for what I have to ask will matter a great deal when the time comes." Whispering her wish to him, he nodded that he would do as she wished. "I'm not surprised," he said after she was done. "I never thought you would be and you shouldn't be surprised what lies at the bottom of everyone's heart. Want to know what made me choose that over everything else?" "I'm sure you have some profound reason." She smiled, "Not really. I'm just slightly selfish, tired, spent, and..." with a big smile she said, "finally I'm done. You don't think so, but let me be the judge."

Asura looked across the black expanse and knew that he did not have to yield to her wish. However this pushed him forward so he looked back to his palm to see Thexory standing there. "Do you know why I thought of you two?" he asked Thex. "We're in your heart." "What would you want?" Thex looked up at him and with a smile said, "Really? You don't know?" Asura stared back with a blank face and answered truthfully for he really wasn't sure what Thex would choose. "Children."

That was the surprise that Asura needed and it took him by surprise. "What did you want so badly a lifetime past? And what do you want now?" Thex asked him. "Someone that will watch over me as I watch over everything else." "Why?" "I'm alone with my thoughts and that's all you are. A part of me albeit a little different." Asura stopped for a bit then said, "But can I tell you something?" Thex nodded which allowed Asura to say, "You're going to be great, Little Star and I wish I could see you through, but we both know I can't. Good luck." With that Asura had Thexory taken back to the place he belonged.

His anxiety grew as he tried to create another small pool and in vain tried to fight the urge to call upon someone else. Within his attempts he hung a moon, then a sun, and before he realized it he had a panorama of planets. We don't always get what we want, regardless of who we are.

Amidst the Blossoms Chapter Twenty-Seven

Three: Do you remember why you like flowers?

Two: They are pretty.

Three: What defines prettiness?

Two: Over the time spent, I have been cultivated into believing and under --

Three: You've been trained to appreciate certain things over others, that why you differ slightly from others because each has been altered differently. Although you may fall into a category along with others, each of you will differ in some way.

Two: I'm tired of hearing the same thing over again!

Three: Then what are you doing? What are you waiting for?

Two: I'm lost.

Three: You have a choice.

Asura's attempt at a new pond far exceeded what was initially intended for he grew large trees and furnished the small oasis with as much as he could so that he could put himself in it. He watched the trees towers and looked up at the 'night' sky however the knowledge that this was his body remained with him and deducted from his appreciation. His planets still hung in the sky though he did not know what he would do with them. As he looked to them, he thought of a creature that could belong to his moon. Remembering her as best he could but fashioned in a new vision, he made her pale, seemingly translucent with a hint of cerulean. He gave her back her long black wavy hair that reached down to her waist and put small purple flowers. Her eyes glowed in a matching colour and she sparkled to match the sky. But she was different than he was – she was away from him, no longer a part. As the child smiled back, he removed her memories in hopes to honour her request.

She had a happy demeanor and tried to accommodate her as best he could, but quickly found that she was a handful to keep up with. As she slowly grew, she began to change from the vision he once wanted her to be into something new. Her hair was much shorter, straight, and now blue-black, her eyes remained the same and her features became more refined. As he created new things to keep up with her, her interests and decisions began to change. He had no name for her however when he added new creatures similar to her, they gave themselves a distinguishing label. “What's your name?” he once asked her. “Magdalena,” she replied earnestly, “that's what they call me, however I don't think that's right.” “Your name is Shockley,” Asura informed her. “What's the difference?” she asked. “There is none, but if you ever wanted to know, that's it.”

Asura understood what they had been telling him the entire time, but not because of this experiment. He would likely never come to understand the various factors at play but he understood the need that so many people had. He raised his right hand and more trees shot up spreading rapidly, holding onto the earth that quickly formed to accommodate them. He vanished into the veil of the night, knowing that there was one more to answer to and that one he would wait till the end to deal with. For now, he'd watch over the development of this new experiment. Though it would likely commit the same errors that they were always doomed to commit, it would be interesting to watch from afar. Although he seemed content with his decision, he still removed “Shockley” with the hopes to return her at a later

time.

When he removed it though, he felt that he had created an injustice to the development even though he knew that this “Shockley” was nothing like the one he attempted to model it after especially since he removed the memories. Instead, the new thing he created was another female, with long black and red hair, with bright red eyes and all her features were small. Shortly thereafter he left them to sort things on their own and figured he'd tend to things elsewhere. What most forgot was that after he created her and named her Ashia, was that Asura was not as purple as he once was – nor black as before either. He took on a bluish colour, dark and not entirely visible but many doubt that she was the same as Shockley or Lilith. But so much has been lost, whose to say either way.

It was never revealed what Shockley wished for or why Asura waited till the end to resurrect something that looked like Lilith. Then again, at the end of it all, was it really Asura?

It doesn't matter so much anymore.

The Dissonant Chords Chapter Twenty-Eight

Ashia was never really seen much during the beginning and as things progressed, it seemed like she just faded away. I can rest assured in saying that because I myself have never seen her but I heard the stories about how she watched over the development of things till they no longer needed her. The truth is that you never stop needing anything – something else comes along to fill that void but it's never the same. So the need changes, just as everything else does.

I, Brennon Ganesh, am no angel, nor a member of the Blood and Bile, however I am a child of the Mahesa lineage. The two houses – that of the Blood and Bile and my own often conduct business together, which is why I am here. Though I suspect that what we once were has been lost. What we have created today often makes me proud because of how far we have come along. I suppose that millions of years ago, there was once something like my family in existence and once something like the Blood and Bile, and hopefully we have changed for the better.

I walked through the long corridor that was well lit; for one side was glass that allowed the sunlight to pour through. My children, Rishi and Ricky were some distance behind, one now fifteen and the other eleven, both taking in the scenery. Ricky had a profound appreciation for the arts so the walls that were adorned with lavish paintings held him captivated. Rishi was more of a scientific inclination however he took into consideration the architecture behind the building. There were no lights above us so I concentrated on the teal rug beneath us as we walked to the top floor, which was right above the main level. I would call this the second floor however the building was built into the earth, so beneath the main level were at least thirty more floors, so it would seem incorrect to say the second floor. As we entered the clearing to the floor, there was a large television and some couches spread about for entertainment purposes. I took the kids into the game room before proceeding to the meeting.

The meeting was held in the adjoining rooms of the late presidents of the company, which had become the unofficial place of all business mostly to honour the ideas behind the Blood and Bile. The room was orange in colour though largely unintended; both of them adored the light so to the left was her office

and to the right was his. Ahead was some scattered sofas and chairs while towards the windows was two desks for whenever they wanted to be out here. There was also a doorway to the left of the desks that led down to the gardens below. The current partners left the room as is and still allowed employees to use it at their disposal.

Today there were four new potential employees though they might be hired already – the Blood and Bile have a tedious hiring process that was simply in place to test how long one could withstand their nonsense. I did not stop to greet the four however I did wave to Madeline as I made my way out through the back. From behind I could hear her explaining that I did not do that out of disrespect, however I was late for a meeting.

When she said that it finally registered that I was in fact late, so I picked up the speed to run down the stairs into the garden. The garden had a full glass dome above it and all sorts of plants. Somewhere nestled within was a small pond to accompany the beautiful set up. The late presidents... I shouldn't refer to them as that; we were all very close. Both had a love for the outdoors, especially gardens however she was never any good with plants so she would tend to the animals while he took care of that. It didn't take long to spot the blanket with two of the current partners on it.

Before I even sat down, Mariel pulled out a cup and began to pour tea. As I seated myself, Jung handed me a sandwich and inquired about the children. After filling him in, I began to eat my lunch while we waited for the other two. "Will Eristesihan be joining us?" I asked between a bite. Mariel nodded, "It's only right we have everyone here from all the parties involved." "No decisions that will effect one another will be made without one another," Jung happily chimed in. "I thought I was late," I mumbled as we waited for the rest. "You most certainly are, however the others are much more late," said Mariel. I had just finished my sandwich when we were joined by my brother, Jace and sister, Jade. "Where's Th--" Jace began as he served himself some wine. "Emerald and Cerul are keeping him busy in the garden. It was unintentional but they ran out and got caught up with some animals or something," answered Mariel. "Thex," finished Jace. "Aren't we missing some other people?" Jade said in a snide voice.

The only reason Jade was moved to do that was because she saw the figures of Asia, the Geisha, Pandora, and Gita slowly making their way over. I could make out the figure of Thexory as his attention was drawn towards them. He called to his children to come back or at least stay within view. I could hear Emerald giggling as she and Cerul plotted something. Thexory smiled and walked back towards us. As Thex neared us, Cian came flying out the entrance I had used with a wide grin. "Sorry, I'm late!"

To clarify, those representing my family were Jace and myself whereas those representing the various affiliations my family had were Jade, Asia, the Geisha, Pandora, and Gita. The partners of the Blood and Bile were Mariel, Cian, Jung, and Thexory. We began discussing the various topics on hand, however when Asia called Cian by his name for the first time in the conversation, with his bright orange eyes he said, "I'd much rather be called Shaun, if you don't mind." A smile was cast upon Thexory's face and so we began.

Maybe Ashia is still watching over us, monitoring us to make sure that we're doing everything just right

this time. In that way, when (or if) Asura gets back, he won't be so distraught over what happened. In the end, you have to hope that you did right by yourself before you can answer to anyone else.

Where Her Heart Beats Chapter Twenty-Nine

Over time, Ashia retained the memory that Asura left behind. He was everywhere and yet nowhere at all so she continued to be haunted by him trying her best to figure out what would appease him. Not entirely sure of where she went wrong, she tended to the things left behind but the one that bothered her the most was the thing labelled “Shockley.” Shockley was the name of a binary star that was blue in colour with hints of yellow, however she also knew that Shockley was the name of the creature that preceded her. It was to her knowledge that Asura struggled in vain to create something new that would not be like Shockley in the slightest. Often enough she wondered if that was why she was reddish in colour while everything that screamed Shockley was bluish in colour.

Asura took refuge in his own self proposed confinement as far away from his toys as he could. He didn't have the strength to face Ashia because of the large error committed on his behalf. In his thoughts, he could no longer see himself as Asura, because to be that entity he would have to be balanced when he clearly gave Lilith back a part of her life. He had not restored her entirely so she wandered around as Ashia. The worse of his grievous errors was that he knew that she was searching for him, attempting to make him happy and he – Jibril – could not face her.

He looked at the preserved body of Shockley that was void of any memories. Of all Asura's possessions, this was the hardest to deal with. Asura had listened to her wishes and found solace; enough so to grant her that much. However Asura wanted her around for as long as possible so he would put her back on the earth for short periods of time and then remove her. Each time though, because it was against her wishes, he would remove her memories. Jibril looked at the body and felt an immense sadness because though Asura had respected her wishes, he had found ways to contort it.

But what would someone like Shockley say? If Asura was using her as his child, then certainly she'd have no qualms. And what if she were just a pet? Or the incarnation of a motherly figure that Asura clearly wanted? Jibril did not want to pity Asura's decisions, however to look at Shockley he knew that Asura removed all her memories. With each new birth, new tragedy, and new end – she would remember nothing. It was the shell of a ghost that helped Asura see past the abyss and give life a chance. Jibril paused to correct himself, it was just the shell of any ghost, it was the shell of many ghosts.

Without the memories and experiences that made these beings who they once were, the shells that remained were nothing. They were an homage to something long gone and now it was the time to give them a chance to change that. Ashia wasn't his Lilith, such as this Shockley wasn't the one from ages ago. Ashia had the chance to change things because she was different so he held onto the things that made her Lilith. “You'll always be Ashia. Good-bye Lilith,” he said to no one in particular. “And to you Adam, I know it's you,” he said to no one other than himself.

He looked over the body of Shockley and paused. She had just returned, however she was already a blank slate. He apologized to the lifeless body, then to himself, and to Asura. Turning back to her, "I'm sorry again, but I am not Asura. And because you are the heart, you will always be you no matter how hard you try to avoid it." Surveying the changes, he returned her memories first and watched her reanimate slowly and painfully. "You never belonged here," he whispered. Through her tears she replied, "I never belonged anywhere and now I'm lost all over again."

"Just wait, you've all the time in the world."

She surveyed all that Jibril had concealed and looked back at him with confusion. With the best smile hhe could produce, he said, "Ashia was first and she paved the way for Thexory, Adam, then Erezziel." "And me?" Jibril smiled, "Do you remember what you wished for?" "No." "I know. Do you remember what they wished for?" "Ashia is new, Thex might have wanted children, Adam wanted his life; a chance to choose again, and Erezziel probably wanted his life." Jibril shook his head, "Lilith wanted to be forgotten, erased entirely. Adam wanted to be near people, those that could reciprocate because without others there was only so much he could do. You were correct about Thex. And finally Erezziel, wanted someone to share an eternity with. You... Well, you didn't know that the rest of them had requests, you only knew about Thex. Does that help you?" "No." "Well, unfortunately, I don't know what you wished for. I just knew that after Ashia, there were very strict rules on how you were to be handled. However, as I said, I am not him thus I have no reason to abide by the contract you two developed." "Maybe I wanted peace," she muttered. "I suspect, that you wanted all of them to be happy. I think you gave up your wish for them and that's why Asura was so captivated by you."

"Where is Asura?" "He has returned to his original state. When Ashia and I join once more, he will come to." Shockley looked over Jibril and said, "You two have been chasing one another for far too long, when will this come to an end?" "It's different now because she's different. Now I have to go back to the start." "Has it ever bothered you that you never said anything to her?" "It goes both ways... she never said anything to me."

There will never be an end till the restless souls find their peace of mind. I guess.

SHAUNA SOLAMAN